Gooding

ART OF THE PATCHWORK QUILT: MARIA NEVER FORGAVE SAM

The "quilting bee" played a very important part in the social life of women of the district. Their love for color and longing for decoration, as well as pride in needlecraft had been handed down to them by their mothers, and even lack of material did not discourage them from trying to work out the patterns which they exchanged freely with one another.

Some of them became very expert in dying flour sacks to fill in the necessary colors to make up the patterns.

Not having the modern ways and means of exchanging bits of gossip and news, the quilting bee afforded them excellent means to get in touch with the latest events, such as engagements, births, styles, and to exchange recipes.

I treasured every bright bit of material I could get, and quilting was an interesting subhect for me. I had nine blocks of my own, which I had laboriously sewed together by hand with the smalles stiches I could possible make; but my neddle work wasn't as fine as my sister Vivien's, for her stiches were very much smaller in spite of the gold thimble my grandmother had placed on my finger when we left for Canada, whispering in my ear that she hoped I would be a very good needle-woman.

It was a sore spot with me that my sister had far more blocks than I did and that they lay smooth without a wrinke or a pucker, while the pattern I had chosen, "The Anvil", wasn't working up nearly as pretty

as her "Rose of Sharon".

One morning when I was on my way to school I saw a thin line of smoke emerging from the chimney of Old Sam's work shop, and as I had an early start I cut across fileds, just to see what he was doing. He wasn't working at the forge that morning, but was busy bolting some kind of a wooden frame together which he explained to me was a quilting frame. He said, "Maria has the quilting bug again and I have to get this ready for the quilting tomorrow. Isn't your mother coming over?" I said, "I don't know, she doesn't usually tell us until it is time to go so there will be less worry and fuss about it."

I hung my three pound lard pail with my lunch in it on the wooden peg and sat on the nail keg to have a chat with Old Sam. I always got a few grains of comfort out of him when I told him my troubles, and when I told him I guessed I never would learn to make quilts, he said, "Well, we can't all be experts. Some of us have to be plodders."

I inquired what pattern Maria was putting on the frames next, and Old Sam ran his fingers through his shock of iron grey hair and said, "Durned if I know; I think she calls it 'Autumn Leaf'. The last one she finished was 'The Ocean Wave' in blue and white, and a right pretty piece of work it was too. But I can't seen for the life of me why Maria wants to keep on quilting when she never uses them. She packs them away in cedar flakes and they never see the light of day only when they have a quilting and she fetches them out to show."

Old Sam dropped his hammer, lighted his pipe, and sat down on the work table. He chuckled loudly as he said, "I remember how upset Maria

got when Jerusha, the Jersey, took sick and I thought I was going to lose her. I couldn't find anything handy just then to cover her so I took Maria'a quilt with the 'Star of Bethlehem' pattern and got her to sweating and saved her from getting pneumonia."

There was a funny little twinkle in Sam's eye as he said, "It wasn't so durned funny after all. It nearly broke Maria's heart when she had to wash the quilt, and she refused to speak to me for months only when it was absolutely necessary; and she has acted queer and distant with me for years whenever quilts are mentioned."" Sam said he thought Maria though just as much of those quilts as my mother did of her children.

Time flew swiftly. Sam described a quilted petticoat that his mother had inherited from her mother that she wore under a skirt with just the front panel showing, and I realized that I was late for school. BuT I lingered long enough to ask Sam if he didn't think he could get Maria to ask me to the quilting, and Sam said, "I will ask you myself. Consider yourself invited. I will speak to Maria about it and she won't mind setting another plate for you."

Then when Sam took out his big watch and looked at it I took my lunch pail reluctantly off the peg and went on my way, arriving at the school nearly an hour late.

The teacher made me stand before the class and repeat, "A diller a dollar, a ten o'clock scholar" twenty times before I could take my seat; but even that couldn't take my mind off the quilting bee, and

visions of the quilts I intended to make some day kept flashing through my mind. Sam got me invited to the quilting in a round-about way, convincing Maria that she needed a hand with the serving.

I was lost in my admiration when the quilts were spread out for inspection. There was the "Water Mill". "The Churn Dish", and "The Garden Maze", all beautiful patterns; and I didn't blame Maria for being proud of them. I had brought my little thimble hoping she might let me do a stich or two on the "Autumn Leaf", but she gave me some wool bats to card instead.

Gooding

BUT THE LEANEST YEARS ARE THE BEST REMEMBERED

Out of all the Christmas seasons I have known, the ones I recall best are not those which fell in the years of plenty, but those which came in the lean years.

For example, I still remember the time when we expected dolls with sleeping eyes for Christmas. Instead, we got stuffed pigs covered with black satin: they had beady eyes and curly tails of crocheted wool. They were miniature Verkshires, carefully made from the black satin lining of Father's old black broadcloth overcoat. We never forgot them.

We had a supreme faith in the old fellow with the white whiskers who came down from the northland and parked his reindeer in Thompson's old red barn while the Christmas celebration was going on in the little church we attended.

We had so much faith in him, in fact, that not one of us arose from his sear to look out the window as he left the church, but sat quietly listening to the jingling of the sleigh bells until they sounded far away. We had been told that reindeer were shy creatures and we must never let them see us.

Now I think it over, I can see that the Santa Claus we believed in was kind of a mercenary old fellow, who brought ys many gifts when we had harvested a good crop, but very few gifts when the years were lean. We never stopped to figure this out, and we would have been just as much disturbed if some one had told us there was no one to answer our prayers, as we were when we first heard there was no Santa Claus.

At one Christmas celebration we attended in the little church, Hank had his first pair of skates, the kind you fasten on the soles of your boots with a key. Tim Stalker, who was more than a little envious, followed us along and said, "You kids don't believe in Santa Claus, do you? "

We assured him that we did. He said, "Don't be silly. That was only Bill Nelson with a pillow stuffed in the front of his suit, and a wig and whiskers made of sheep's wool.

But what about the sleigh up in the attic shaking a piece of harness with some sleigh bells attached to it."

He said, "You can see for yourselves there are no tracks in the snow, and there isn't a track around Tompson's barn either." We didn't go to see because we didn't want to find out, and we pelted Tim with snowballs until he went home.

Another Christmas, the leanest we ever experienced in the west, there wasn't any money and no way to get any. Father had shown us the inside of his buckskin wallet and it was empty. He told us not to hang up our stockings, but we still had faith in the old fellow with the whiskers, so we hung them up anyway. We hung Father's and Mother's at the head of the lineup, for Hank and I had a secret and we had done much whispering about it as Christmas Eve drew near.

We had looked after the chickens for a bachelor neighbor of ours when he was riding the range looking after his cattle, and as a reward he had given us the hide from a big roan steer he had killed. It was a beauty and he told us it should bring us at least $2.

We hid it in the hay in the barn loft to keep it soft and pliable, and on Christmas Eve we put it in a sack and lugged it down to the trading post.

The man who ran the little trading store had a heart of flint and he found all kinds of fault with the hide, offering us 75 cents for it. There was nothing to do but accept it, and we were only able to purchase a glass cake stand for Mother and a shaving mug for Father, when we had fully expected to get a gift for every member of the family. We stood looking into the glass case where he kept the Christmas candies, and the old fellow relented enough to give us each a strip of striped peppermint candy.

Just as we were leaving, a group of men on horseback drew rein at the hitching post and entered the store. They were a rough looking bunch, with stubble on their faces an inch long. There was a dance in the school house that evening, and they had come down from the sawmills with the intention of attneding. They wanted to know where they could find a barber, and the old storekeeper told them there wasn't a barber to be found.

Hank removed his little muskrat cap and said very proudly, "My father is the best hair shingler and shaver in the country," and he smoothed his cropped head to show them just how good he was. It wasn't long before their horses were tethered at our gate. Father was surprised, but he recognized an opportunity when he saw it, and he soon had the old ivory-handled razor running up and down the strop.

When they had gone, the old buckskin wallet had quite a few 50 cent pieces in it and he looked at the line-up of stockings with a

little more confidence as he headed for the store to do his Christmas shopping.

Gooding

BLESSED EVENT - WOMEN OF PIONEER WEST KNEW WHAT IT WAS TO SUFFER

I visited a friend a few days ago in the maternity ward of a large hospital. She looked very lovely in her pink bed jacket and very comfortable in the neat white bed.

When I commented on how well she looked after her ordeal, she said, "My doctor gave me plenty of ether. He doesn't believe in letting women suffer too much in childbirth."

From there I went into the nursery where the newborn babes in their snowy white cribs were receiving as much attention as the rarest flowers in a hothouse, and as I passed from the nursery into the white walled corridors, my thoughts travelled far afield, and I thought of some of our prairie mothers, my own among them, who settled in the North West Territories and raised their families without ever seeing a doctor or a trained nurse, and whose babies were very fortunate if they had a crib to lie in.

These women never knew what it was to have the pangs of childbirth alleviated by an anaesthetic in the hands of a skilled practitioner, and firmly believed that they, like Mother Eve, must bring forth their children in sorrow and suffering, and if they did anything about it they would be punished by the wrath of the Almighty.

We were indeed fortunate in having two midwives in the district, Mrs. Webb and Mrs. Payne -- you could take your choice -- both skilled and clever women in the work they had chosen.

Our first suspicions that there was to be a newcomer in the family were

aroused when the midwife was called in to visit my mother a short time before the expected event. All sewing and preparations were kept hidden from our sight, and when the time arrived we were hustled off to the neighbors to stay overnight.

The morning after we would be up bright and early to hear the verdict, a boy or a girl, and so another one would take its place in the family ranks and the small toddler who occupied the crib and the highchair would have to give them up to the newcomer. Small families were seldom heard of in those days.

The midwife came in daily to look after the pateint, and a girl was hired to do the housework if you were able to pay her wages, which ran about three dollars a week. For this sum she was expected to do the housework, washing, and also the milking.

I was eight years old before I ever saw a doctor. Then I got a compound fracture of the arm from the kick of a horse. I was taken eighteen miles to the end of the steel where a doctor had settled.

He administered an anaesthetic, and I think they fully expected me to die from the effects of it. My parents didn't like it at all. Then it began to be whispered about that the merchant's wife in that little settlement had sent for ether and had the midwife administer it when her child was born.

The rest of the women were sure that she would be punished for it, that her child would be crippled or have a weak mind or some dire misfurtune would overtake her. When they found that none of these things happened to her, some of them weakened and took a few whiffs when their babies were born.

The midwives were not only sent for in childbirth but when sickness overtook any member of the family. They never refused to come at any hour of the night.

There were no clinics for the babies or pre-school clinics then, and our teeth never received any attention whatever until they ached or abscessed, and we were sent to the village blacksmith who owned a pair of forceps.

He first lanced the gum, with a small penknife, and then held you in a firm grip with one arm and his knees while the offender was extracted. This is about the worst punishment I can remember and it only cost us twenty-five cents for one extraction.

Although I think the hospitals and clinics of today are wonderful, the midwives were a part, and a most important part, of the day in which they lived.

No tribute too high could be paid to them for their unselfish labors for which in many cases, they did not receive any compensation whatever. In spite of that they were always willing to serve when sickness came, or death was hovering near.

Gooding

THE COW FROM GEORGIA

One of my earliest recollections is the way we traveled in covered wagons to the North West Territories, like gypsies, journeying by day, and camping by night in strange places. So many things had been eliminated from the load at the last moment that I was always a little uneasy for fear that I might be left behind.

There was a mad scramble to hide the things that faither said would take up entirely too much room. I felt a trifle guilty and a little smug and wondered what he would say if he knew that the pockets of his sheepskin coat hanging on the stave of the wagon directly behind him were bulging with such things as small china cups and saucers, tin soldiers and marbles, and that my big Raggedy Ann doll was under the cushion in the seat he was sitting on.

As long as I could see my father's broad shoulders and the wide brim of his hat outlined in the opening to the covered wagon where he sat in the driver's seat, and knew that my mother was close at hand, it didn't matter much which way we traveled. But my father always had a definite place to settle in view; our course had been carefully charted so that we would not lose anytime as we journeyed across the land.

We met up with many people who were also traveling the same way, as we were looking for a likely place to settle. Whenever covered wagons came abreast, the greeting was always the same, "Hello, stranger, where you bound for?" The men related with feet crossed

on the dashboards, pipes were lit and notes compared on the journey, while the canvas was pulled in various place to afford the women and children an opportunity to exchange interested stares.

If it happened to be near meal time we stopped and visited with the strangers. The smell of bacon frying was soon mingled with the pungent odor of the sage brush we had gathered to kindle a fire in the little camp stove, while mother poured the baking powder bread mixture into the pan with a worried look. It all depended on which way the wind blew whether the stove would draw, or the bread would rise or fall.

Letters from a distant relative in Alberta told us of the Rockies with their snow-capped peaks towering above the pine clad hills. There were glacial lakes as clear as crystal, clear running streams, good hunting and fishing with wonderful opportunities to make a new land.

One family we met were bound for British Columbia and they showed us a book with beautifully illustrated pictures of the fruit that was grown in that country. That book nearly changed the course of our journey, for my mother couldn't get the Okanagan Valley off her mid for many days to come.

Our lead team was a perfectly matched team of blacks, and we had many offers from horse traders we met along the way. Horse trading was quite a business in those days and these fellows were almost as prevalent as horse thives and cattle rustlers. Father loved to trade, and he never made one without saying with a speculative air,

"Now, what are you offering to boot?" Whenever he wavered over the blacks, mother gently reminded him that one of them was her personal property, and the trade was off.

We had camped on the banks of a lake in a western state where the ground was white and spongy with alkali. Father was shooting ducks and "Fly", our little bird dog, was bringing them in, when an old prairie schooner with two angular mules attached hove into view over the hill. A crate of chickens was nailed on the side and a sad-eyed Jersey cow tied on behind.

The strangers were invited for fried ducks, and it didn't take long to get acquainted. The name was Shirley, and they had come all the way from Georgia. It had been a long journey for them, and they were nearly out of provisions. Their animals had been poisoned from eating blue larkspur or some plant en route, and this had delayed them for weeks.

My mother was very pleased to have another woman to talk to and she and Mrs. Shirley, whom they called Ma Caroline, sat on the wagon tongue and talked in the evening until the mosquitoes drove them inside. Ma Caroline told us they had to practically drag the Jersey across the State of Georgia and she had pulled back on the rope all the way, until she had worn the hide off her neck.

Othar Shirley had been a camp preacher of some kind in the South, and he invited us over to his camp each evening for a word of prayer. From that day to this I have always been suspicious of anyone who says, "We will have a word of prayer." Othar reviewed the history of the wolrd and the calamities that had befallen the unrighteous

from time to time, and he lost all track of time and space as he knelt there on one knee with his hands clasped, while we groaned inwardly and wiggled and squirmed from kneeling so long on the hard ground.

When we reached the St. Mary River and then viewed that turbulent stream running deep and swift at that time of the year, he told my father that he had been "impressed" not to attempt to cross here but to seek a safer crossing farther down. Othar was entirely right that time, for we were nearly drowned in that river through getting too far below the ford.

We didn't think we would ever see the people from Georgia again, as they had talked of going to Medicine Hat, but two months later, when we had our first cabin nearly finished, they arrived. They didn't like the country and they were on their way back to Georgia.

Ma Caroline said if she ever got her foot set in Georgia again she would never leave it. The Jersey had gone dry, and father and Othar were dickering over her. Father traded him a bay horse that would rest the mules off for a spell one at a time.

I don't think that cow ever forgave us for keeping her from returning to her native state. We called her Georgia, and years later, when father was selling a calf, I heard him say, "Yes, sir, that heifer's grandmother came all the way from the State of Georgia." But he didn't tell them how reluctantly she came.

Gooding

THE EARLY BIRDER: A PARABLE OF CHRISTMAS TIME

A certain woman who lived in a small village in the foothills to the south of the great city of Calgary, made a vow unto herself that this year she would do her shopping early, and when the day arrived upon which she would leave for the city, she arose bright and early, having had her car serviced the preceding day so that there would be no delay in starting the journey.

She took to the highway before the rays of the morning sun had time to reach the earth and melt the frost upon the windshield of the car which she was driving, and no other motorist was seen upon the highway so early in the morning.

For this woman had compiled a list carefully of her friends whom she wished to remember with gifts, her heart being filled with the Christmas spirit and good-will toward men.

She had also agreed to do a favour for a friend who at the last moment had discovered that she was leaving for the great city. She bore with her a sample of silk of a very delicate shade of blue, which she had promised faithfully to try and match for this friend who would of necessity have to remain from the Christmas festivities if this yard of silk was not forthcoming.

This woman was very conscientious and would not think of consulting her own list until she had first obtained the piece of material. Bolts and bolts of silk of every shade of blue were laid before her in the shops, but none of the particular shade which she was seeking. The woman's sight became blurred and everything within her vision took on that baffling shade of blue and her feet grew very weary as she walked along

the crowded streets of the great city from shop to shop.

The hours of the morning sped by on wings of lightning, came noon, and the woman had need of refreshment to bolster up her strength in the great search which she now knew was before her.

She noted many people traveling to the lower part of a great building on a stairway which carried them down and immediately came back for another load, so she took her place upon this stairway and soon found herself in the lunch rooms in the midst of a mighty multitude of people.

Some of these people were seated and others waiting for a place at the banquet tables, there the majority of those who were already seated were engrossed in eating chicken pois that had been brought to them from the great white kitchen beyond. These were served in individual casseroles, and the pleasant odor which arose from them pleased the woman so, that when the slender girl in white placed a card in her hand, there was no need of consulting it and she, too, had a chicken pie brought from the kitchen.

For a time the woman forgot her weariness in the enjoyment of the delicious dish set before her, and consoled herself with the thought that others as well as herself had difficulties. Even the great chef in the kitchen must have his problems, and the woman visioned the man in white sitting on a dais of frozen lard with his forehead pressed against the palm of one hand, while with the other he held a huge crystal ball from which he was trying to discern just how many more hundred chicken pies he would need to prepare to satisfy the hunger of the multitude who awaited without the portals.

As the woman looked around the rooms, she marveled at the many different types of people gathered here on this common ground of hunger, who when that same hunger was satisfied could be whisked to the floors above and once more take their places in their respective walks of life, be it high or low.

Once more she walked the crowded streets searching for a place which she perchance had missed in the morning hours. Surely in all this great city there must be some place here this elusive shade could be found.

She turned into a side street and came upon a sign which read, The Great Dictator," and being weary again she entered the darkened portals and rested again for a time. Here she forgot the silk entirely; and the time sped by so rapidly that when the woman emerged into the street again, she found that the stores were already closing and that the sun was sinking rapidly within the western sky.

Not wishing to brave the crowded highways against the glittering lights of reckless motorists, the woman piloted her car out onto the highway homeward bound.

And only then did she realize that all day she had passed by displays of gifts that she had intended to purchase, and that the list she had compiled with so much care still reposed within the corner of her purse unopened, and that she still had not obtained the important piece of silk for her friend.

The woman was loath to go home and face the thought of the disappointment of her friend, and was very annoyed to think she had not purchased one of the many things which she had intended while in the great city.

Then she made another vow unto herself that she would still do her shopping early; so early, in fact, that she would steal away in the night and no one, not even one, could be aware of her intentions.

Gooding

FATHER ALWAYS TOOK A WALK - WASH DAY WAS WORK IN THOSE DAYS

Washing machines are advertised on the market today as virtually able to do their own thinking. The housewife stows a nine pound load of clothes in the door, sets the controls to regulate the water temperature and number of minutes for the washing, feeds it soap and then goes for a stroll if she feels so inclined.

How my mother would have appreciated a machine like that! In those days there were no robot washing machines to relieve the drudgery on wash day. The only gadget there was to adjust was the big bar of homemade soap on the wash board; and instead of mother taking a stroll it was father who took a walk over the hill on wash day.

Father hated the smell of soap suds, and the mere mention of wash day was enough to make him reach for his stetson hat which he kept hanging on the polished steer horns near the kitchen door. He would murmur something about Rowdy having cast another shoe or the wagon reach being broken and would ease his six-foot out of the kitchen door, giving us a final warning to keep a good supply of wood on hand for mother. He would go over the hill to Levi's blacksmith shop, and we knew that he wouldn't return until the last sock was hung on the line.

The modern machine is connected with hot and cold water supplies. Solenoids and float valves automatically turn the water on and off while thermostats control the temperature as desired.

Our connections with hot and cold waters were more remote than that.

We formed a bucket brigade to relay the water from the well a hundred yards distant.

We small girls thought it great sport when we were very young to be permitted to rub the coloreds and the stockings on the wash board, and usually soaked our clothes thoroughly while we were doing it. But as we grew older it became a task we didn't like, and we always scanned the clothesline anxiously when we came out of school to see if the overalls and stockings were hanging on the end of the row.

Clothing worn today is much simplier than we were accustomed to and and much material could have been eliminated, especially in the nightgowns we wore. They were made with a lining in the yoke, Mother Hubbard style, with voluminous skirts a foot longer than was necessary. We wrapped them around our feet at night, and I remember many a scrap occurred during the night because we would get our feet wrapped up snugly in the tail of the wrong nightgown.

When the boys quit wearing nightgowns they considered themselves quite grown up and their ambition was to be able to sleep in their underwear like Shes Busnig who boasted that he hadn't worn a night-shirt since he was six.

The first thing we heard on Monday morning was 'If you want anything washed you better bring it out.' And then there was a hurrying and a scurrying and rattling of bureau drawers as we hunted for soiled articles. The clothes were sorted into neat piles to await the tubbing, reminding me of piles of new mown hay lying in the field.

My sister and I had begged my father to buy an organ so we could

take music lessons; but father said, "there will be no organ until your mother gets a washing machine."

We were all very pleased when he arrived home one evening after a trip to the nearest city with a brand new washing machine in a crate in the back of the wagon. A wooden tub with metal hoops and trimmings of bright red. No more blue Mondays for us, and we each volunteered our services to stay home and turn the handle of the new machine.

Father insisted on demonstrating it the first day; but he found, like we did, that it was a different matter turning the machine when it was full of clothes than when it was empty. That was his first and last demonstration, and he continued his trips over the hill on wash day after that.

Ironing day was a big day, and sometimes two big days, for we used the old heavy irons with the handles welded right on them, and with padded iron holders that slipped around that caused blisters on our hands and fingers.

Mother spent many hours ironing the ruffles and insertions without which no garment was stylish in those days; and father's shirt fronts and collars were cold starched along with the sunbonnets, and these took much more care in ironing.

Then came the mending, and we learned to darn and mend while we were still very young. Sometimes my sister and I were permitted to take the family stocking bag with us when we visited the Dusnip girls for an afternoon, and the Dusnip girl would bring out their family

stockin bag. We darned stockings, pausing occasionally to read a chapter of the Elsie Dinsmore books out loud. We gossiped quite a bit about things that occurred in the district, and if anyone had been listening in we might have been a little surprised at the subjects under discussion, and the opinions of small girls about their elders.

We were so absorbed in our darning and gossiping one afternoon that we carelessly let the Dunsip socks get mixed up with ours, and Hank had to ride like Paul Revere on the Sunday morning following to get them straightened up before father could go to church.

Father who is growing old paid me a visit just recently after I had not seen him for many years. I asked him, "Can you remember when you used to take a walk over the hill ever wash day?" He said "I still do." Then looking at me a little suspiciously and reaching for his hat he asked, "You are not going to wash today are you?"

Gooding

HANK DREW INDIANS, AND MARIA WORE HER BEST BONNET

Reading and writing and neat rows of sums on slates seemed very trival and unimportant in the little school that I attended on an Alberta hillside many years ago -- when one could look beyond the windows and view the ramparts of the Rocky Mountains close at hand, boldly outlines against the sky.

Bare feet swung restlessly beneath the seats, for shoes and stockings had been discarded early in the spring, and now toward the end of May cracked toes were burning for the feel of the damp soil and cool grassy slopes.

We were making preparations for the closing day, which was the last day of May, a month earlier than the boys and girls of today are dismissed. Many trips were made to the big stone outside the school room door where we sharpened our slate pencils by rubbing them to a sharp point. We had to do a smaple of our very best work on our slates for exhibition when our parents and the trustees came to the closing exercises on the following day.

I was very proud of my brother Hank, who had been excused from class work for three days while he stood on a chair at the front of the classroom decorating the blackboard with fancy spirals and scrolls in colored chalk.

The teacher reprimanded several pupils for using their sleeves to clean their slates instead of the small bottle of soap and a clean rag which they had forgotten to bring for the purpose.

Hansel Strate wiggled around in his seat until he drew the attention

of the teacher who said, "Hansel, stop that wiggling, and how many times have I told you not to chew your slate pencil?"

Hansel raised his hand and said, "Please teacher, I have a big sliver in my big toe," The teacher said, "Very well, Hansel, you may come forward and bring a chair with you.

The pupils were all attention now, for they knew she was going to remove the sliver with the big darning needle she had taken out of her desk for the purpose. Hansel sat on a chair and place his foot on her lap and while he wriggled and squirmed the pupils watched breathlessly; and then the tension relazed and a ripple of laughter went around the room as Hansel shouted "ouch" and the offender was laid on the deak.

Many of the girls had their hair done up in curl papers and rags so they would have curls on the closing day. One more night to sleep on those bumpy nobs for beauty's sake. We had promised the teacher not to plague her before the parents and the trustees.

Maria, the village gossip, was the first to arrive; and as she was the wife of Old Sam, one of the trustees, she was given a seat near the front. She wore her black bonnet that she had brought into the country with her, and only wore on special occasions.

Hank said it reminded him of a crow's nest with its brim curled up by the ravages of time. There was a bunch of purple flowers growing from the depths of the crown -- a little wilted and faded looking -- and a black satin ribbon to tie it under the chin and hold it firmly on the back of her head.

We were more than proud of Hank when his turn came to draw his

cartoons on the blackboard, He hung his head shyly and dug the toe of his stout boot into the floor as they applauded when he had added the finishing touches to the head of Old Chief Tecumseh.

Then he drew a sketch of an Indian on the warpath, and the horse the Indian brave rode looked quite ponderous and suspiciously like our Blue Bell with an elaborate belly band. Surprising how many of his Indian faces in the campfire scene he was trying to depict had faces so much like the local citizens that in spite of their elaborate feather headdresses they were easily recognized.

The teacher reached on tiptoe to rub something off the board and showed the edge of a red silk petticoat below the hem of her skirt -- or was it sateen? We didn't know, because our knowledge of silk was limited. This incident seemed to upset Maria considerable, and she expressed her opinion on the matter as she walked home with my mother.

She didn't think the young lady should flaunt a red silk petticoat before the pupils, and her blouse was entirely too low in the neck line, and short sleeves should never be worn in the school room. Mother said, "Well, Maria, I have often heard you say there was virtue in red flannel, and the same may apply to the red silk petticoat." And then she looked a little pointedly at Maria, for we had often had a glimpse of Maria's red flannel petticoat as she went flying across the fields with a bit of choice news that simply wouldn't keep.

Gooding

HANK'S FIRST PAY CHEQUE - He Had a Present for Everybody

Hank had arrived home at the close of the haying season after his first honest to goodness job with real wages. We treated him more like a guest than a member of the family, and stood around admiringly as he cut father's old leather money belt down to his size to carry his money in.

He spread the folding money out on the table and we studied the bills with much interest. Tubby insisted on looking at them through the telescope. Hank had bought himself a pair of waist overalls and a pair of second-hand leather chaps, and he strutted up and down trying to walk bandy-legged like Ez Layton, who was No 1 cow hand in the district.

Tubby produced the boot hack he had made for Hank while he was gone, and struggled manfully with the boots. He wouldn't even permit Hank to saddle and bridle his own pony, but brought him up from the barn all ready and stood by like a vassal waiting for him to mount. Mother said this humble attitude was a little strange for Tubby, and she was sure he must have something up his sleeve. Tubby did have something up his sleeve, for he had raked up his courage to ask Hank to buy him a boughten suit also, and Hand had promised, on conditions.

Hank had figured on doing his shopping from the mail order catalogues, and he kept us in a dither with hints of what he was going to buy. Then father came home with the announcement that he was going to Calgary on business and Hank could ride with him on horseback as far as Macleod and then take the train to the northern city.

Hank had promised us girls enough blue velvet for jackets and tams and we tied samples of blue silk thread around his little finger so he

would be sure and get the right color. Tubby had clipped a picture out of the catalogue of a suit just like the one he wanted, with full instructions as to color and size.

Two anxious weeks we spent waiting for the travellers to return. When they came in sight, Hank had so many parcels tied to the saddle straps we couldn't have seen his head if he hadn't bought himself a new high hat. What an excited little group gathered around the living room table while the parcels wer being unwrapped and the gifts examined by the light of the lamp.

Queen Victoria, who looked down at us so regally from the wall in her royal blue robes trimmed with ermine, couldn't have been any prouder than the two little girls with five yards of royal blue velvet. We didn't have any ermine to trim it with, but we had silver buttons with anchors on them.

Tubby was so overcome when he got his suit that he hid his face in the feather cushion in the big rocking chair, and we couldn't make out whether he was crying or laughing. There was a shirt to go with it without a single ruffle on it, and a jack-knife and a chain, which he insisted on wearing like father wore his watch chain.

When he retired for the night, mother looked to see what he had done with the suit, nut it was nowhere to be found. Then we discovered that Tubby was sleeping peacefully with the suit folded neatly under the pillow, where he had placed it for security, fearful lest it take wings and fly away during the night.

Hank had visited the barber and had his first professional haircut. While he was waiting to get into the chair, he had heard several customers who

were ahead of him say, "Give me the works," and so he did likewise. Although the barber seemed a little surprise as Hank settled himself in the chair, he quickly recovered his balance, with an eye to business, and proceeded to give him the works.

It cost Hank two days' work in the hayfields. He had a haircut, a shampoo, and a massage with cold cream applied to his sunburned and very freckled nose, and something very fragrant applied to his hair. Tubby was so entranced with it he followed him around insisting that he remove his hat while he sniffed the delightful odor.

He had bought a souvenir of Calgary, a walnut shell with a miniature folder about a yard long with views of Calgary's beauty spots which folded neatly into the shell. Written on the outside were the words in India ink, "Calgary in a nutshell."

There was a set of amber side and back combs for mother with colored sets, and a new coffee grinder. No one had been forgotten and he still had a little money tucked away in the leather belt.

There was something else he had purchased he kept hinting about until our feminine curiosity got the better of us, and we resorted to tactics that were not considered good sportsmanship to find out what it was. We tickled him until he yelled "surrender". It was a postcard he had purchased in a Calgary drug store, the picture of a very stout lady standing before the mirror in ruffled chemise and corsets, with the strings hooked over the knob of the bed while she measured her receding waist line with a tape measure.

We assured Hank that it was very, very wicked of him to have it, and we took it from him.

Mother said Hank's summer away from home and the trip to the city had done him a world of good, that he was getting more polite and considerate of his sisters every day, when she saw him letting us ride in the saddle while he meekly rode behind. But she didn't know about the postcard which we dangled over his head like the sword of Damocles.

Gooding

HANK WANTED THE HOUSE TO HAVE ROOM - THE FAMILY DIDN'T LIKE A BASEBALL NINE

Hank was very much concerned with keeping up with the Joneses and it wasn't a matter of worldly goods for they didn't possess any more of those than we did. It was the fact that their family had increased more rapidly than ours, until they were nine and we were six. Hank couldn't stand it when the Jones boys twitted him about it at school, or when Mr. Jones bragged about raising a baseball nine.

We had just about given up hope of ever catching up with the Joneses for Alfie, the youngest member of our family, was now three years old.

After passing those four boys around in a pram one after another everywhere we went, my sister and I welcomed the lull in the family increases. But Hank was so disgusted that he reinforced the springs of the old pram with strips of green rawhide, and used it to haul up the winter turnips for storage in the little cellar under the kitchen floor. Father met him at the door as he arrived with a load, and with a startled look, said, "Go easy on that pram, Hank, we might need it again some day."

The portent of this remark passed right over Hank's head, but my suspicions were aroused. And they were not without grounds, for I was rudely aroused from my slumbers in the early hours of the morning not long after that, and told to dress quickly and get the little fellows ready, for we were going to the Dusnip's for a day or so, and there might be a surprise for us when we returned. My sister, who was getting to be quite handy around the house, was permitted to remain.

Father had the black team and white-topped buggy at the door, and we were soon on our way. The Dusnips had a spare bedroom, something not many log

cabins boasted of in those days, and Mrs. Dusnip had offered to take us in return for hospitality we had extended when some of the Dusnips had been born.

We felt very lonely and frightened after Mother left, and Mrs. Dusnip looked very formidable in her curl papers and pink flannel wrapper, as she held the lamp aloft so we could see our way to climb the ladder that led through the trapdoor into the spare room above the kitchen. She said she would leave the lamp in the kitchen until we got settled, for we might burn the house down if we took it up there.

We had such a time gettin settled. It was a wooden poster bed with a straw tick stuffed so full we had to give one another a leg up, just as we did when we mounted the pony bareback. And then we had to hang on tight to keep from rolling off. We finally managed to put the pillows on the side instead of the head and lay five in a row, feeling al ost as forlorn a the babes in the woods must have done, with the robins hovering over-head with strawberry leaves to cover them.

Cubby insisted on saying his prayers again, and closed with 'Oh, Lord, please let me go home, and don't make me be the Dusnip's child." Albert fell asleep trying to figure out how they got that big wooden bedstead up there through the small trapdoor.

I was awakened a few hours later by a loud grinding noise that vibrated the whole house, and found Albert, who was ever curious, lying on his stomach looking through the opening around the stovepipe where it ran through the floor to see what was going on in the kitchen.

He said they were puttin pails of milk through a big sausage grinder. We had seen pictures of separators in the Farmer's Advocate, but this was

the first time we had seen a real one. Mrs. Dusnip rapped on the trapdoor with the broom handle and told us to get ready for breakfast. We were a little timid about going down, for she had boxed Ches Dusnip's ears several times already that morning, and we had heard him howling.

We lined up at the tin basin in the woodshed at the back of the kitchen to wash. I scrubbed their necks and ears good and clean, parted their hair on the side and made a little cows-lick over their foreheads with the dampened hair brush just like father wore his.

Father had told us to be on our very best behavior, and I was more than humiliated when Tubby stared at his bowl of porridge like a little shrinx and refused to eat it. Mrs. Dusnip said, "If he doesn't want to eat it, take him away from the table."

It was a rainy day, and she gave us an old catalogue and a pair of dull scissors and told us we could cut pictures out of it, so we played in the little attic room all day. Hank discovered a chink in the wall where the dabbing had come loose, and we kept a lookout at this little porthole all day, watching for the black team to come over the hill. But we had to spend another night in the spare bedroom.

We heard father's voice the following morning, and were instantly up and ready to go home. Albert insisted that father had given our log cabin a new coat of whitewash while we had been gone, but father said he hadn't. He said things always looked better when you had been away for a while. We tiptoes in one by one and visited my mother and the newcomer, and we all agreed that he was a smart little fellow.

Tubby said, "Ah, gee, did yuh see the way he clinged onto my fingers? He's going to be a wrestler sure."

Hank sniffed disgustedly and said, "He's going to be a baseball player and he's going to be on my team, too," And then he started to reckon on his fingers, "If we could get a pair of twins now we would be even with the Jones's."

Father, who had been listening in on the conversation, said, "I'm afraid you are going to be disappointed, boys. This one won't be a wrestler or a baseball player, either, because it's a girl."

Gooding

A HERBALIST IN THE FOOTHILLS; SARSAPARILLA, BOTRUM, AND ASAFETIDA

Granny had seen seventy springs come and go, and she was still as spry as a kitten. Every spring, as soon as the winter's snows were gone from the hills, she set forth with a basket on her arm and her little dog "Lady" a few jumps ahead of her, searching for the first signs of spring. It may have been this eternal quest that kept her eyes so bright and blue, for she needed no glasses to find the pale green shoots of the first spring flowers peeping from the dark mold.

She clucked with delight when she uncovered the furry tips of crocuses as she poked among the dead leaves and grass with her stout cane, which she used for digging. She cooed like a dove if she uncovered a clump of violets in bloom sheltered under a buck brush that was already blossoming with small yellow flowers and sending its pungent odor out on the spring breezes. Granny lived alone in a one-room log cabin with "Lady" because she didn't choose to live with her daughters-in-law and they in turn didn't like the way she cluttered up the place with the bunches of herbs that she dried and used for medicine. She had worked for an herbalist in the Old Country when she was a girl, and knew the names of nearly every thing that grew in the fields and its medicinal value.

We practically adopted her when we came to Alberta, and although she wasn't our own grandmother, we often wished she was. It was a well-beaten pathway that lead to Granny's house, and the footprints varied in size from the oldest to the youngest.

We were delighted to accompany her on her trips in search of spring, and found it hard to keep up with her nimble feet as she darted here and there, the deep-gathered flounces on her black percale skirt with its

white bowknot design swinging in the breeze. She wore a black and white knitted lacy head-piece which she called a fascinator.

We picked the tender reddish green shoots of the sour-dock and chewed it, and it puckered up our mouths as though we had been eating pomegranates She told us it was good for us, although I can't remember just what for. She told me an infusion made of the grass called cleavers, commonly known as goose-grass, would banish the freckles like magic if I bathed my face in it. This started me on a quest that lasted for many seasons, but the magic grass evidently didn't grow in those parts. I always imagined that all that stood between me and a spottless complexion was a few clumps of goose-grass.

After she had gathered all the herbs that were necessary, she started to make her spring tonic, a marvelous concoction. We never refused to take her medicine, because we didn't like to hurt her feelings, and mother said it would like [illegible] do us more good than harm. (She did have to remonstrate a little with Granny when she gave us too much senna tea).

There was a smell of herbs simmering for days in the brown stone jar on the back of the stove, and then last of all she added an ounce of golden seal and rhubarb powders before the mixture was strained and set aside in old vinegar bottles, "to blend and strengthen," she said.

As soon as the tonic was ready, Granny would call us in just casual-like, as we were going for the mail, and say, "Land sakes alive, you young ones are looking downright peaked around the gills. No color in your cheeks, and your eyes look jaundiced. Come over here by the window where I can get a good look at you and let me look at your tongues."

By this time our chests were sinking and our stomachs sagging and knees knocking. Even Loby's rotund figure seemed to shrink in proportion. She ladled the stuff out in a wooden spoon because, she said, it took the silver off the spoon. She said, "This will put strength in your bones and iron in your blood, and make the roses bloom in your cheeks."

I helped her pick the wild parsnips all one afternoon and when I began to wonder what she was going to do with them and inquired what they were for, she said a little reluctantly, "Well, there's no reason in the world for Johnny Reese to suffer from epileptic fits when a tea made from the wild parsnip will cure him." I said, "But how are you going to give it to him, Granny?" She said, "Where there's a will there's a way," and I knew Johnny was practically cured when Granny made up her mind.

Instead of putting the pussy-willows in a vase, she hung them in small bunches on the rafters to dry. They were good for certain kinds of fever when steeped in hot water and made into a tea. She made me a small bag of asafetida, attached to a string, to wear like a charm around my neck when the measles were reported in the district. The charm failed, and then she came with a steaming bowl of sassafras tea under her apron to allay the fever and encourage the measles lurking under the skin to come out in the open.

It was a great honor to be invited for tea. There was a tall pewter tea-pot with an opening in the spout no larger than a match, from which the tea was poured in a thin amber stream into the yellow glazed earthen tea cups and a slice of caraway seed loaf cake to go with it. I always sipped my tea a little anxiously at first, for fear she had added some of her precious native herbs.

"Granny, don't you ever get lonely living here alone?" I said. Granny's eyes twinkled brightly, and she blushed like a school girl as she said, "No," very decidedly.

"Some folks think I would like to change my lot. Now there was old Jess Rider, a trapper, who lives up on the Beaver Dam lakes. He came a-courting me a few years back. He had on his best suit, his duffy hat and a bunch of spring beauties in his lapel. But he didn't get a chance to propose because Lady, whose teeth were very sharp then, chased him back onto the main road, and I have never seen him close, since."

She sniffed and tossed her head as she poured another cup of tea, and said, "Who wants to pelt muskrats for the rest of their lives?"

Gooding

JESS WASN'T HANDSOME: BUT HE NEEDED A WIFE

Hank and I had been fishing the upper creek all day. We had a nice string of speckled trout at sundown, and it was time were were heading for home. But we had other plans in view, and we were in no hurry to hit the trail.

Our pony was pawing the turf inpatiently and showing the whites of his eyes in evident disgust at our antics, for Hank kept crawling onto his back and from there to the low-lying limb of a big poplar tree, climbing from there to a pont from which he could get a clear view of the surrounding district. He had repeated this performance several times before he shouted from his lookout in the tree: "There's smoke coming from the chimney now!"

We had been waiting for signs of smoke to emerge from the chimney of the cabin where our old friend, Jess Oakey, lived about a quarter of a mile further up the creek. This was why we had lingered so long. We intended to call on him and we had timed our arrival just when we knew he would be frying his salt bacon and eggs for supper. We also knew he would ask us to sit in and have a bite, for we had a standing invitation to dro in any time we were fishing the upper creek.

Jess specialized in raising pigs, and they were all a bright henna color, a shade that would make any of the ladies of today who favor that tint for they greying locks quite envious. He said it was eating so many rutabagas that made them that color, but rutabagas was a favorite dish of Hank's and they hadn't altered the color of his hair in the least, so we took that remark of Jess's with a pinch of salt.

When we came in sight of the cabin, we staked the pony in a clump of willow bushes and made Keeno, our old yellow hound, lie low while we crept down the creek bank. We stooped low when we passed under the window so we could surprise him; but the surprise was on us that time. Jess had three places set at the table, and when we popped our heads in the door and yelled surprise, he said "Surprise nothing! Why that old yellow hound of yours has been down here half a dozen times today chasing the fat off my hogs, and I knew you two youngsters were in the neighborhood somewhere. I'm sure glad you popped in because I want to send an order off to the mail order house for overalls. These I'm wearing are just hanging together with the dirt that's in them."

Jess poured boiling water over the salt bacon in the frying pan and let it boil until he thought enough of the salt had been removed, then drained off the water and let it fry until there was enough fat in the pan to cook the eggs. The hens were laying well and he fried us a couple each, and a couple for Keeno, a luxury that hounds were not accustomed to. He offered to cook up a mess of porridge for the dog, but we assured him that Keeno preferred his oatmeal raw, and that that was what made him so sleek.

I was more than pleased when Jess asked me to make the milk gravy. Hank said my gravy was as smooth as the feathers on a duck's back and I took the big spoon with confidence, for every homesteader, young or old, knew how to make milk gravy. Hank poured the milk into the pan for me after I had blended the flour with the fat, and then Jess said, "Come and sit, you young ones, and try and make out a meal."

This was the first time we hadn't had to wash our plates and knives

and forks before we ate, and that was because Jess knew we were coming. He apologized because he didn't have his bed made and his cabin clean. We took advantage of this opening to talk about something we had discussed with Jess on many occasions. We thought he ought to have a wife to look after him and keep his house clean, but Jess said he was so confounded homely no female would look at him the second time. Said he wasn't too bad looking when he was 20 but he was woefully lacking in courage; and he had less of that now even than he had had when he was 20.

It was true Jess wasn't much for looks. His hair and beard were redder than the bristles on the pigs he raised. But he sure had a good disposition. Lonny Bigler had got himself a wife and he wasn't any better looking than Jess and not half as amiable.

Jess said a female was just a bill of expense and he said, "Now the first thing one of them would want me to do would be to move the swill barrel right out of the house. She wouldn't want me to cook the pig feed in the house either. Like as not, would demand a new floor right off the bat."

I said, "Why don't you advertise for a wife, Jess? I saw an advertisement in a paper that Uncle Louie brought up from the States that said a lady of means would like to meet a man with kind disposition, matrimonially inclined, and she was willing to go anywhere."

Jess said, "A man is sure taking a chance if he answers those things. Why like as not he would pick himself a shrew."

I scalded the milk pans and set the milk before we left, and Hank slipped a couple of his trout in the water pail as we went out just to give Jess a start when he went for a drink.

When we arrived home H ank said, "Father, what is a shrew?" Father explained to the best of his ability; and Hank said, "Well, how does a man know whether he is getting a shrew or not."

Father laughed and said, "He doesn't; he just has to take that chance."

I told Hank I thought it would be too bad if Jess picked a shrew; he was such a kind man. Hank shrugged his shoulders as he carefully clipped the advertisement out of the paper and folded it away under his hat for safe keeping until the next time we went up the creek.

"Well," he said, "He will just have to take a chance."

[illegible] to check - and [illegible] "that they couldn't have put a piece of paper between them they were sitting [illegible]."

[illegible] the [illegible] it was time they [illegible] but [illegible] [illegible] and [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

ladies would be scandalized to hear of 'such doings on."

The young lady who danced with a piece of paper between her face and that of her partner is now a grandmother, and when she speaks of the days gone by she says, 'I remember the dark corners and the Anchorage Rock who always thought we were in love. When I see my grandchildren jitterbugging or cutting capers I always think, Oh, well, maybe they inherited it from their grandmother.' I wouldn't want them to know that Grandmother was a jitterbug, but neither would I have them think of me as 'the bell on the Anchorage Rock'".

Gooding

Turner Valley

LIKE TOPSY, IT JUST GROWED

Turner Valley, like Topsy, "just grew", and how it had survivied its bringing up is a mystery, but survive it has, in spite of its unwelcome birth and Topsy-like growth. Much water has run down the bed of the old Sheep River since gay splotches of dandelions were uprooted among the willow bushes to make way for the tar paper shacks that were crowded into every available space.

The odds in the beginning were heavily against its ever becoming an orderly village. Companies holding leases provided space for their employees to build, but when the little merchants came to take advantage of the boom there were many signs posted, "You can't come this way", and "You can't go that way". The ranchers reinforced their fence lines and their gates, and they said "We have no land to spare".

The merchants were persistent fellows, not easily discouraged, and they found a trail between the signs where they gained a foothold and hung on tenaciously to this one-sided street that faced a company fence line and consequently threatened to become a couple of miles long.

They called it the Main Drag and hung out their signs, even though their eyelashes were dun-colored fringes from the swirling clouds of dust as the street was levelled, and their windows were filled with rubber boots to combat the mud when the rains came. The the silver (that had turned black from the action of the gas) began to tinkle into the cash registers, and Turner Valley Village was launched on the first lap of its chaotic career.

Neat stuccoed houses were built for company employees on the hill overlooking the flats where the tar-paper shacks nestled along the banks

of the Sheep River. When the residents of the shacks saw the row of houses appearing on the hill they thumbed their noses and called it "Snob Hill".

That the early residents had a sense of humor is shown by the names they bestowed on the streets, Whisky Row, Frontenac Avenue, Royal Avenue, Poverty Flats and Dog Town.

There was a lack of good drinking water and residents had need of that, in spite of rumors to the contrary. It was then that Dad Williams and Charlie Houghton reconized an opportunity and began to haul from the springs west of the village to supply the householders. It would seem strange to Turner Valley folk if they didn't hear Dad Williams shouting at his horses as he drives along perched up on top of his water tank.

Every householder had his own private flare, made by running a gas line into an empty oil drum or into a pit in the ground, where refuse and slops were emptied to be consumed by the heat. The odor of potato peelings, dishwater and scraps of food bubbling in the pit back of the restaurant attracted the pigs that one of the oil well officials was raising as a side line, and these porkers had the hair literally singed off their backs from rooting around the flares. The dogs, too, were whiskerless and clean-shaven from coming in too close contact while scavenging for bones.

It was about this time that a new hair-do came into style in the valley. The ladies started wearing bangs because so many of them had their front locks singed off while lighting the flares after the wind had blown them out.

There were human pan-handlers as well as animal scavengers to annoy the

householders. A little old forlorn-looking figure of a man came and sat beside our flare one frosty evening and attempted to warm his hands while he shivered and shook. When he saw us watching him he came over and begged us in a quavering voice for a can of water and a pinch of tea. I have him 50 cents instead, and told him to get himself a good hot meal. Later that evening he returned and laid down to sleep beside the flare, far too close for his own safety. Attempts to rouse him from his slumbers were of no avail. He was sleeping off the jag he had acquired from the rubbing alcohol he had purchased with my 50 cents. He pan-handled his way from flare to flare until the law caught up with him.

Viewing the village at that time from the hills beyond reminded one of the crazy-patch quilts our grandmothers made from the ends of silk ties and other scraps of material, the haphazard way it was laid out. When the boom was at the pinnacle, we had a mayor and a council and had also acquired a nuisance ground where burned-out stoves were deposited along with other refuse. When the mayor and his council threw down the tangled reins, the government administrator reluctantly tucked the indigent village under his wing and administered to its needs for the next ten years.

The village not only survived the holacaust of 1931, when practically the whole main street was levelled by fire but also survived the big migration south in 1936 and 1937, when the merchants stood in their doors with grim faces and watched half of the town move south. They faced the slump with a determination to stick with her whether she flopped or not.

A writer from Eastern Canada described Turner Valley as a place where brilliant flowers bloomed in 40 below weather and we almost expected to

find orchids blooming around the flares after reading this, instead of the lowly dandelion. We did find tomato vines growing near the flare on the McLeod Lease. These had evidently taken root from seed that came from scraps of sandwiches dropped by transients basking in the warmth of the flare, and from the lunches of school boys who played hookey and hid in the bushes to read thrilling westerns where the heat from the flare kept them warm on the coldest days.

Even though we found no orchids, we think Turner Valley deserves a few for the eternal struggle waged to find a place in the sun in the face of so many odds. It's a village in which we take some pride now, although there is still room for improvement.